



Issue 505: March 2020

## Alfalfa Stand Assessment

*Scott Serwe, CCA, Technical Team Agronomist - LG Seeds*

With the recent warmer weather, many alfalfa growers have started to wonder if their alfalfa fields made it through the winter in good condition. Let's discuss what to look for when the time comes to evaluate alfalfa stands.

Fields that have lower pH, potassium and sulfur levels, as well as older stands, tend to have more winter injury associated with them. However, it's still important to evaluate all stands. Here's what to look for:

- **Slow or no greening in all or portions of fields.** Examine the whole field and look for areas that are green while other areas are brown. Injury could have destroyed the roots and crowns.
- **Root damage.** Damaged roots cannot sustain crown regrowth. It is important to dig and split roots. Healthy roots will have a firm and white appearance. If roots are spongy, look yellow or dehydrated, they are showing injury. Over time these roots could get diseased, start to rot and turn brown.
- **Uneven regrowth.** Damage to the crown buds will create uneven regrowth because the surviving buds will start growing and be taller than the crown bud that regenerates in the spring. If you see brown areas make sure the plants are dead and not just delayed. Injured plants can sometimes delay green-up and recover. It is important to look at the roots and the crown and determine how healthy they are before deciding on keeping the field in production or not.



Dead plants with dehydrated, yellow-brown area below crown



Injured and dying plant on left (yellow taproot below crown) and healthy plant on right

It is important to determine the yield potential of a field to determine the stand's fate. The best way to do this is by counting how many stems per square foot are present. You should take counts in multiple areas of the field. The chart below provides guidelines about yield potential based on stands.

stand density (stems/sq ft)	action	predicted yield potential (assuming no winterkill)
>55	stem density not limiting yield	same as current year
40-55	some yield reduction expected	if good health, same as current year; if >30% in category 4, significantly less
<39	consider replacing stand	if good health, same as current year; if >30% in category 4, significantly less

Want a second opinion about your alfalfa stand? Reach out to your local Technical Team Agronomist or STAR Partner dealer – they’re here to help you grow! #WeMeanBusiness

**References: and additional information:**

1. [http://www.uwex.edu/ces/forage/pubs/assessing\\_alfalfa\\_in\\_spring.pdf](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/forage/pubs/assessing_alfalfa_in_spring.pdf)
2. <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/uwforage/StandEvaluationFOF.htm>

Note: The information in this issue is based upon field observations and third-party information. Since variations in local conditions may affect the information and suggestions contained in this issue, LG Seeds disclaims legal responsibility, therefore. Always read and follow label instructions. LG Seeds and design are trademarks of AgReliant Genetic, LLC. AgriShield® and Advantage Acre® are registered trademarks of AgReliant Genetics, LLC. Advantage Acre® is a product of AgReliant Genetics, LLC